

before a panel of adult judges on constitutional topics. The students' testimony is followed by a period of questioning by the judges who probe their depth of understanding and ability to apply their constitutional knowledge.

It is inspiring to see these young people advocate the fundamental ideals and principles of our government. These are the ideals that bind us together as a nation. It is important for our next generation to understand these values and principles which we hold as standards in our endeavor to preserve and realize the promise of our constitutional democracy.

On behalf of all Rhode Islanders, I would like to congratulate Najiya Abdul-Hakim, Janice Abueg, Peter Calci III, Kristin Capaldo, Elizabeth Champagne, Tara Cooney, Tara Czop, Paul DiMartino, Thomas Driscoll, Christopher Ellis, Tinisha Goldson, Kenneth Halpern, Sarah Johnson, Alyssa Lavallee, Robert Martin, Michael Muschiano, Lindsay Nagel, Michael Ouellette, Anthony Politelli, Michael Ryan, Kendall Silva, Sarah Smith, Corey St. Sauveur, Kate Studley, Erin Watson, Shane Wilcox, and their teacher Marc Leblanc. I would also like to acknowledge Rhode Island State Coordinator Henry Cote and District Coordinators Carlo Gamba and Michael Trofi for their dedication to this program over the years. These students truly represent the future leaders of our Nation.●

#### TRIBUTE TO DEPUTY COOPER STEELE

● Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a true hero; Deputy Cooper Steele of Kenton County, Kentucky. The Northern Kentucky Police Chiefs Association recently recognized Deputy Steele as the 2002 Outstanding Police Officer of the Year for his performance in the line of duty. Today, Court TV in conjunction with the Women's Caucus and several congressional members recognized Deputy Steele and six other heroic individuals around the Nation as a part of Court TV's "Everyday Heroes" Initiative. This is certainly a special day for Deputy Steele and the entire Commonwealth of Kentucky.

On November 2, 2001, while on what appeared to be a routine patrol, Deputy Steele observed black smoke coming from an apartment building. Without hesitation or fear, Deputy Steele immediately stopped his patrol car in front of the building and noticed a woman on the third floor desperately screaming for help. Deputy Steele attempted to enter the apartment building but was violently driven back by the thick and suffocating smoke. With complete disregard for his own well-being, Deputy Steele heroically climbed onto a second story balcony and directed the evacuation of the four member family from the third floor balcony by handing them down one-by-one to another officer and out of harms

way. There were many other families still trapped in the burning building, but they refused to attempt a floor-to-floor transfer as the first family had done. Once again demonstrating his selfless and heroic nature, Deputy Steele refused to leave the scene, continuing to place himself in harm's way. He remained with the other tenants advising, encouraging and keeping them calm until the fire department equipment arrived to safely extricate the people from the building.

I am truly honored and humbled to be representing amazing individuals such as Deputy Cooper Steele in the United States Senate. In these trying and turbulent times, men like Deputy Steele should serve as an inspiration to us all. His heroic actions saved lives. His selfless nature shed a ray of light on a seemingly hopeless situation. I ask that my fellow colleagues join me in thanking Deputy Steele for having the instincts and the heart to do what he did. This man is a true hero and deserves our sincerest admiration.●

#### RECOGNITION OF OLDER AMERICANS MONTH

● Mr. SARBANES. Mr. President, in 1963, President Kennedy began an important tradition of designating a time for our country to honor our older citizens for their many accomplishments and contributions to our Nation. I rise today to continue that tradition and recognize May as "Older Americans Month." Those of us who have worked diligently in the U.S. Senate to ensure that older Americans are able to live in dignity and independence during their later years, welcome this opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions of those individuals who have played such a major role in shaping our great Nation. We honor them for their hard work and the countless sacrifices they have made throughout their lifetimes, and look forward to their continued contributions to our country's welfare.

Today's older citizens have witnessed more technological advances than any other generation in our Nation's history. Seniors today have lived through times of extreme economic depression and prosperity, times of war and peace, and have seen incredible advancements in the fields of science, medicine, transportation and communications. They have not only adapted to these changes remarkably well, but they have continued to make meaningful contributions to this country.

Recent Census figures reveal that the number of older Americans continues to grow. The population of those 85 and older grew 37 percent during the 1990s, while the Nation's overall population increased only 13 percent. Approximately 35 million people 65 and older were counted in the 2000 Census as well as 50,500 Americans who were 100 or older. Baby boomers, who represented one-third of all Americans in 1994, will enter the 65-years-and-older category

over the next 13 to 34 years, substantially increasing this segment of our population.

At the same time the number of older Americans is skyrocketing, they are in much better health and far less likely than their counterparts of previous generations to be impoverished, disabled or living in nursing homes. Older Americans are working and volunteering far beyond the traditional retirement age to give younger generations the benefit of their wisdom. In 2000, those 65 and over comprise 14 percent of the U.S. labor force.

These positive figures show that commitment to programs such as Medicare and Social Security, and investment in biomedical research and treatment are improving the quality of life for older Americans. One of our national goals must be to ensure all older Americans benefit from these improvements. In Congress, we must ensure our legislative priorities reflect the dedication that older Americans have provided to this country. This includes expanding and strengthening those programs that effectively aid older Americans, and addressing those that fall short of assisting this valuable and constantly expanding segment of our society.

By 2020, Medicare will be responsible for covering nearly 20 percent of the population. Though Medicare meets the health care needs of millions of Americans, it was created in a different time before the benefits of prescription medicines had become such an integral part of health care. Three in 5 Medicare beneficiaries lack affordable, prescription drug coverage. Although people 65 and older are 12.5 percent of the population, they fill 34 percent of all prescriptions. Today it is difficult to imagine quality healthcare coverage without including medicines that treat and prevent illnesses.

I have and will continue to fight for Medicare prescription drug coverage for all seniors. As a cosponsor of the Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage Act of 2001, I recognize the predicament of many older Americans as they struggle to live independently on a fixed income and afford costly prescription drugs. The huge advances in biomedical research that have led to the life saving drugs and treatment are of little use if the population that stands to benefit the most cannot afford them. It is imperative that we address the needs of the Americans who have devoted so much of their life experience and achievement to better our society. Like all Americans, they deserve access to comprehensive health care.

One of the strengths that I admire most about older generations is their devotion and concern for younger Americans. As we face the dilemma of funding Social Security and investigate proposals to privatize the program, older Americans have been the most outspoken advocates of ensuring its existence for future generations. Their determination to preserve this